

Message Text

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64

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01

EB-11 PM-07 NSC-07 SPC-03 SS-20 PRS-01 DRC-01 CPR-02

/101 W

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R 071637Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2687

INFO AMEMBASSY SOFIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 1402

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, BR, GR

SUBJ: SENIOR MFA OFFICIAL'S COMMENTS ON DEPARTING
BULGARIAN AMBASSADOR

1. COINCIDENT WITH LOCAL ANNOUNCEMENT THAT BULGARIAN
AMBASSADOR LJUBOMIR POPOV WILL DEPART ATHENS LATE MARCH
OR EARLY APRIL TO BECOME AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON,
AMBASSADOR PAPAIOANNOU, CHIEF OF FIRST DIRECTORATE
(COMMUNIST COUNTRIES), MFA, MADE FOLLOWING OBSERVATIONS
TO EMBOFF BASED ON PAPAIOANNOU/POPOV CONVERSATION OF
MAR 7:

A. POPOV WAS SELECTED FOR THE WASHINGTON POST DESPITE
THE FACT THAT HIS POSTING CONTRARY TO BULGARIAN
ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICE ON TWO COUNTS: FIRST, POPOV IS
RETURNING TO A POST WHERE HE PREVIOUSLY SERVED IN JUNIOR
CAPACITY; SECOND, POPOV WILL HAVE THREE CONSECUTIVE
POSTINGS ABROAD, CAIRO, ATHENS, AND NOW WASHINGTON.

B. ALTHOUGH POPOV WAS CLEARLY BEST QUALIFIED FOR
WASHINGTON POST IN EYES OF HIS SUPERIORS, HE IS UNDERTAKING
ASSIGNMENT WITH MISGIVINGS AND SOME APPREHENSION. HIS
PRINCIPAL TASK IS TO PROMOTE SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT IN
US-BULGARIAN COMMERCIAL AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS, ESPECIALLY
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TO OBTAIN MFN FOR BULGARIA. INDICATING HE IS ALREADY FEELING

THE PRESSURE, POPOV TOLD PAPAIOANNOU THAT HE IS "EXPECTED TO PRODUCE RESULTS." NOTING SOVIET DIFFICULTIES IN CONGRESS OVER MFN, POPOV OPINED THAT HIS CHANCES FOR SUCCESS WERE SLIM INDEED.

2. PAPAIOANNOU ALSO OFFERED HIS APPRECIATION OF POPOV'S ACTIVITIES DURING HIS 2-1/2 YEARS IN ATHENS. HE NOTED THAT WHILE INFORMAL, SEEMINGLY FLEXIBLE, AND ENGAGING, POPOV FREQUENTLY RESORTED TO DEVIOUS ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES WHICH MADE LIFE MISERABLE FOR HIGH AND MEDIUM LEVEL MFA OFFICIALS (READ PAPAIOANNOU). POPOV WAS FOND OF EXTRACTING SEMI-PROMISES OR VAGUE "COMMITMENTS" FROM MORE SENIOR GOG OFFICIALS (PATTAKOS AND PALAMAS WERE MENTIONED) AND USING THEM IN EFFORT TO EXTRACT CONCESSIONS ON WORKING LEVEL. AT ONE POINT IN 1972, PAPAIOANNOU EXCHANGED STRONG WORDS WITH POPOV OVER THIS PRACTICE, AFTER WHICH THEIR WORKING RELATIONSHIP IMPROVED CONSIDERABLY.

3. PAPAIOANNOU ALSO VOLUNTEERED MFA'S IMPRESSION OF STRONG RIVALRY BETWEEN POPOV AND HIS PREDECESSOR IN ATHENS NENKO TCHENDOV, WHO RETURNED TO SOFIA AS ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR BALKAN AFFAIRS. ACCORING PAPAIOANNOU, TCHENDOV FREQUENTLY SOUGHT TO TORPEDO POPOV'S EFFORTS TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS BETWEEN GREECE AND BULGARIA, WITH ULTIMATE RESULT THAT "TCHENDOV SITS IN SOFIA UNDERMINING POPOV, WHO SITS IN ATHENS AND SPEAKS AGAINST TCHENDOV."

4. EMBASSY IMPRESSION OF POPOV WILL BE FORWARDED SEPARATELY.
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